



"EUROPE"?

By

COUNT K. VON DÜRCKHEIM-MONTMARTIN

In these days of emerging "Grossraums," we have asked a Japanese professor and a German philosopher to write about the true foundations of East Asia and Europe. Professor Hara's essay was published in our last issue. Here we present Count Dürckheim's contribution.

Europe's past entitles one to the query whether, in view of two thousand years of constant warfare, such a thing as "Europe" really exists. Count Dürckheim gives a thoughtful answer to this question.

News dispatches from Europe indicate almost every day that there is a growing Pan-European feeling, particularly in the younger generation. This is one of the most encouraging features of our war-torn age. Here are a few items we happened to notice during the last few weeks: a Youth Congress with representatives of fourteen European nations, a musical competition of soloists from all over Europe, an exhibition of painting and sculpture by young European artists, the establishing of an organization for the collection and exchange of European folk music, the meeting of the European Authors' Association with representatives from fifteen nations, and a congress of student-soldiers from all nations participating in the war against the USSR.

During the Great War, Count Dürckheim was an officer in the Bavarian King's Guards and fought in France, Belgium, Serbia, Rumania, and northern Italy. This constituted his first study of European psychology. He made his first intimate acquaintance with Europe's enemy, Bolshevism, when he was put in prison by the German revolutionary government for fighting against the German Reds. Later on he studied philosophy and the psychology of nations; for he believed in the renewal of mankind from the spirit, and in the necessity of all nations co-operating on the basis of the mutual knowledge of each other's national characteristics. He became professor of philosophy at the Pedagogic Academy in Breslau and at the University of Kiel, and traveled a great deal in Italy and western Europe. In 1938 he made his first visit to Japan and returned there in 1940. He is now living in Tokyo.

This article is accompanied by a number of photographs of outstanding examples of European culture.—K.M.

WHAT is Europe? A unity? A multiplicity? Perhaps both at once? Perhaps neither of them? As a rule, when such questions are raised, the economic point of view is put forward in the search for a reply. Thus for most people the New Order of Europe means a systematic planning of the economics of all Europe. Europe is a natural unit of economy—that is the idea. Or people speak of the unity of Europe in the sense of her common destiny. Or Europe is considered a natural unity because she is fighting today against common foes.

UNITY OR MULTIPLICITY?

But can economic possibilities alone form the basis for an enduring unity?

And does not a unity for the fighting of a common foe mean simply a unity for one purpose only, a unity which will disintegrate when the foe has been defeated? These questions are enough to show that the right to speak of Europe as a unity can, if at all, only be derived from a spiritual basis.

Seen from the Orient, Europe appears very largely as a spiritual unity. Of course, a distinction is made today between the political spirit of the states grouped around the Axis and that of their opponents. But this should not obscure the fact that the peoples of the Orient still regard Europe in a light which makes all European peoples appear comparatively uniform. To the Orient,

they all seem to possess the "Western" spirit, the spirit of science, technical progress, and organization, as well as the spirit of individualistic materialism. This, according to Oriental ideas, is the spirit of Man in Europe. And although Asiatics do their best to realize that individualism and materialism have been successfully combated within the sphere of National-Socialism and Fascism, they still find it hard to abandon their original conception of the European spirit, identified as it has been with the "Western" spirit.

MUTUAL MISCONCEPTIONS

Of course, the European does not acknowledge this Oriental idea of Europe, just as the nations of the East do not acknowledge the generalizing conception which the average European has of the Asiatic world. In this conception, the "East" is equivalent to world-negation, emotional vagueness of thought, inability to act, and identification of Man with Nature to a degree which makes it difficult for him to assert himself truly as Man and make Nature his servant.

In reply to this, China, for instance, can with justification point to the world-affirming spirit of her Confucian moral code, just as Japan can point to the successes of her energy and power of organization, without which her present victories would never have been possible. The various nations of the East are conscious of their differences in race, standard of living, cultural level, historical achievement, indeed even in spiritual value, and they have no desire to be considered a homogeneous mass. And yet, when Asiatics are among themselves and look toward Europe, they feel they have something in common, something they are proud of, something which gives them the sense of being closer to the meaning of life than the European. And the nations of Asia feel, not without justification, that this something which they have in common, this something they are proud of, is generally not understood at all by the European.

In just the same way, however, Europeans vehemently contest the Orient's

generalizing conception of Europe. They see in it a caricature of their character and spirit, a distortion of their idea of life through the one-sided emphasis on their technical abilities and material achievements, while their manifold cultural powers are completely ignored. The peoples of Europe are conscious of deep-rooted differences among themselves: eastern Europe as opposed to western Europe, northern Teutons as opposed to southern Latins. Every true European considers these differences as the basis of Europe's cultural wealth, which is more important than all science and engineering. And yet, when Europeans are among themselves, they, too, feel that they have something in common in which they differ from Asiatics, something *they* are proud of, something which, as they believe, renders them closer to the meaning of life and the tasks of mankind on earth than the people of the Orient.

WHAT IS EUROPE?

What is it that is common to all Europe in the spiritual sense? On what is based the hope of finding a firm spiritual foundation for a new Europe? Might there be an intention to Germanize one part and Italianize the remainder? Certainly not. Might perhaps engineering, science, and power of organization—that is, those very things which make Europe appear as a unity in Oriental eyes—form the unifying links? Certainly not. Well then, what is "Europe"? This is also the question Adolf Hitler asked in a speech at the end of last year and which he answered as follows:

"There is no geographical definition of our continent but only a racial and cultural one. The border of this continent is not the Ural but that line which separates the Western conception of life from that of the East."

We shall try to outline the main characteristics of this conception of life.

For the development of the understanding between East and West it was of tragic significance that the Europe presented to the East when the latter

first opened its doors to European influence was, indeed, to a large extent a victim of its one-sided materialistic development, and that it came to the Orient mainly in its American form. Another distorting factor was that the Orient itself has hitherto mainly been interested in the rational achievements of the European spirit. Thus the Eastern idea of Europe is a resultant of all that which appears to the East as useful, dangerous, or repulsive in Europe.

THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

One of the fundamental errors of the East in its valuation of the West is that the latter must be identified with individualism. Here one might interpose: Can it be denied that the European idea of culture accords a central position to the individual? The answer to this is: The true European acknowledges *individuality* but denies *individualism*: he denies the *ego* but strives for *personality*. European culture has always been and will remain a culture which affirms and encourages the individual personality.

But have not the European Axis countries taken up the fight against individualism? Is not their entire strength founded on the fact that they have destroyed individualism in their own countries and have replaced the demands of the individual by the idea of the whole, of the people and the State? In all the years I have spent in the Orient I have rarely met anyone who has known how to solve this apparent contradiction. Time and again the question is put: Everything in Germany is directed today towards the community, yet they always speak of the personality, of the individuality, indeed, of the absolutely decisive role of the individual. How can the one be reconciled with the other? The solution of this apparent contradiction is the first prerequisite for understanding the true European.

Over the gateway of the history of the European spirit are inscribed the words of the Greek poet Pindar of the fifth century B.C.: "Become that which thou art!" The center of our picture of antiquity is held by the creative individual and its immortal works of art. Socrates became the father of European thought because he felt the very personal voice of his heart to be a divine voice and, following its call, demanded that the laws governing the conduct of a community should harmonize with the voice of the human heart.

uity is held by the creative individual and its immortal works of art. Socrates became the father of European thought because he felt the very personal voice of his heart to be a divine voice and, following its call, demanded that the laws governing the conduct of a community should harmonize with the voice of the human heart.

The greatness of the Roman conception of the State is founded upon the fact that the citizens of Rome voluntarily subjected themselves to the community, and in return received from the State a guarantee of their personal belongings and their personal freedom.

Christianity, the religion of the Occident, has for its central idea the immortality of the individual soul. This belief makes Man the center of Creation, lifts him up above Nature, and gives each individual a feeling of the eternal value of his own personality. Luther became an outstanding reformer of Christianity because he re-established the personal contact of the soul with God against the standardizing tendency of the Church. In him arose that fundamental belief of the European soul which is based on the feeling of the eternal significance of the individual soul and the immortal value of its uniqueness.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

This feeling is also the source of that irrepressible desire for freedom and independence which is characteristic of the European, of that urge of each individual to stand on his own feet and to lead his life as much as possible according to his own desires, to choose his wife and occupation, even his master and his leader. All this, however, only has meaning when combined with the determination of the European to assume personal responsibility for what he does.

The European conception of life culminates in the idea of personal responsibility which nobody can relieve one of, in the conviction that, in the final analysis, all life of the human community as well as all culture is founded on the

responsibility of individuals free to decide for themselves. This fundamental idea of the European finds its political fulfillment in the "principle of leadership" of both National-Socialism and Fascism, a principle which builds the life of the State and of the people on the decisions of individuals who are conscious of their responsibility. This attitude found its common cultural fulfillment in Goethe, its religious fulfillment in men like St. Francis and Luther, and its economic fulfillment in the enterprises of a Siemens or a Zeiss.

EGO AND PERSONALITY

As I write these lines about the European belief in the individual, I can clearly hear the cry: There you are—when all is said and done, it is the ego which is the center of life and activity. It is individualism, the cult of the ego, after all!

No! The strong emphasis placed on personal responsibility in the European idea of man indicates that the affirmation of individuality does not mean the affirmation or justification of egoism of any kind. Since ancient times, the high valuation of the individual personality has been founded rather on two essential prerequisites: the negation of the little ego and the *bondage* of individuality.

Master Eckehart, the German mystic of the thirteenth century, once said: "Thou must destroy thy ego to gain thy self." And Luther, who stood for the religious right of individuality with revolutionary force, designates the "absorption of Man in the structure of his ego" as the original sin of mankind, and he calls the ego the devil. What is meant by these seemingly paradoxical words, every one knows from his own experience, for who is not aware of the fact that the small and great vanities and lusts of the "beloved I," its hunger for power and striving for recognition, its desire for material pleasures, are contrary to the innermost roots of his being? These deep roots in us speak to us as our conscience and demand from us a selfless attitude in the community and in the world as well as loyalty toward that

unique something in us that appears as our individual character.

Pindar's "Become that which thou art," Shakespeare's "To thine own self be true," Goethe's "Respect thyself," refer to just this unique, individual shaping of the human and divine in us. And it was just this feeling of the uniqueness of his individual essence as a divine mystery which attracted the early European so much to the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the individual soul.

However, the idea of loyalty and service is inseparable from the feeling of the individual self and the desire for freedom of the European man. This leads us to the second prerequisite for the European affirmation of individuality: its bondage.

THE THREE BONDS

Only when one has recognized in what multiple sense the individuality is bound in the European conception of the personality can one understand the human side of the European spirit.

The idea of serving, of vassalage, of loyalty to one's lord, is the oldest form of this bondage. Besides this, in the course of history three basic forms of such bonds have been developed, whose triple effect makes up the present-day nature of the true European spirit: the bond between Man and God, Man and his humanity, and Man and the nation. The first bond arises from Christianity. The second is the heritage of Greece and of the humanists from the Middle Ages up to Goethe. The third is a combination of the Roman idea of the bond between Man and State and the German idea of the bond between the individual and his people.

The spiritual unity of the European is deeply grounded in this conception of individuality and its triple bond. Whoever violates this conception goes against the true Europe. Wherever the bond with humanity is disrupted, there begins that narrow Chauvinism which sees only barbarians beyond the frontiers of its country. And wherever the bond with

the nation is disrupted, there begins unrealistic internationalism.

MAN AND HIS COUNTRY

The belief in the eternal value of individuality is not limited in European thought to the individual man, but finds its natural continuation in the belief in the eternal value of the individuality of a people. This idea is common to all Europe, especially since Herder gave the world his wonderful conception of a flight of steps of individualities: from the individual to the nation, to the world, to the cosmos, everything overshadowed and penetrated by the individuality of God, steps in which each individuality fulfills the meaning of its life by serving the one above it. This idea is now being developed politically in the conception of the New Order of Europe, in the center of which stands the belief in the individuality of each people and in the natural interdependence of the various national forces in the European whole. It is based on the ideas, on the one hand of the subordination of the individual to his people, and on the other of the inclusion of each individual people as a member in the higher unit which is Europe.

This strong sense of individuality was formerly also one of the reasons for the political weakness of the nations now united in the Axis. In these nations, each individuality had forgotten its higher bonds, and the individual demands of little principalities and cities hindered the unity of the greater nation. Today these dangers have been removed, not through the exclusion and denial of the creative powers of the individuality, but through their inclusion in the life of the higher entity. In the same way the powers of individual enterprise in the economic sphere have not been excluded and sacrificed to an all-encompassing State or an all-commanding central bureaucracy, but included in the economy of the nation.

MAN AND HIS WORK

Beside the belief in the eternal value of individuality stands, as a general char-

acteristic of the European spirit, the bond between Man on the one hand and work and reality on the other. Indeed, this is not just a bond that exists separately: in it alone can those other bonds be realized in everyday life. To it are due those achievements which, shaping the earth and mastering reality, have become the symbols of European civilization.

It is true, the fact that Man has been placed into relationship with the outer world is also responsible for that danger of superficiality and "soullessness" to which for a time the European fell victim. The reproach raised against the European of being a creature that has sacrificed his inner harmony to outer organization, and his heart to science, although true of certain undeniable manifestations of the Western character, does not apply to his spirit as such.

THE BLUNT WEST . . .

The well-known Japanese art historian Tsudzumi has introduced the expression of "framelessness" as the comprehensive characteristic of Oriental art. And indeed, whoever has tried to analyze the nature of Asiatic life and creativeness as opposed to the European always runs up against this strange trait of "framelessness." In contrast to this, the sharply outlined form is symbolic of Europe. Whether it is a precise term, an unequivocal answer, a clearly shaped piece of work, a system of philosophy, a musical composition, a personality or, finally, an economic or political organization, they all exude the atmosphere of a structure clearly outlined in space.

This is just what the Oriental feels to be typically European and foreign. He asks: Why express everything so clearly and bluntly—is not an indication enough? Why outline everything so sharply—is that not contrary to life? In reality, is not everything bound up with everything else through all-penetrating life? Why must you always have a clear Yes or No? Does not real life always contain both in one? Why organize and fix everything down to the last? Does that not contradict ever-flowing life which

runs its course between growth and decay? This European way of sharply outlining everything may be useful or even necessary to certain modern purposes; but as a way of life it is without soul. Real life knows no limits, that which is limited and contrasted is only illusion; that which is limitless is truth and life.

... AND THE VAGUE EAST

The European, on the other hand—how hard he finds it to become used to what to him seems so unclear, so vague, uncertain, disorderly, so intangible in the East! He thinks: Everything is in a state of transition, nothing clearly defined, everything only "approximate." Why not a frank No, when one thinks No? Why only indicate something which can be carried out? Why only a sketch where one expects a painting? Why leave so much in disorder that could with so little effort be tidied up? Why make so many things in such a way that they just barely hold together, why not make them to last? Why only renew something when it is on the point of collapse and not at the first signs of wear? Is it not essential to see and shape reality in clear outline, to make things so that they endure in reality, and to perfect them in a manner corresponding to their inner laws, to their inner nature?

In all these questions a very definite lack of understanding for the other side is expressed.

European thought and creativeness have been determined since ancient times by clear perception. That which antiquity has given us in its glorious statues, that which distinguishes our splendid architecture, the incomparable creations of European music—it is always the same, namely, that they embody this basic European power of perceiving the nature of things in clearly defined forms and of expressing this in works of art.

This perception is not a superficial emphasis on the outward appearance, as it may easily seem. When the Oriental gazes beyond appearances, he perceives the formless origin of all existence, beside

which all visible form is only illusion. When the European gazes beyond appearances, he perceives the essential shape of things beyond all the imperfection of their reality in a given space and time. He measures the imperfection of each form of existence, not by the formless origin of life, but by its essence which aspires toward a very definite shape.

This trait of the European spirit, this perceiving in clear shapes, has never been properly recognized in the rest of the world, for it was, as it were, obscured by that counterforce in European thought: the power of analysis. For in addition to the perception of the indivisible essence there is the urge towards analysis and differentiation, with the final aim, however, of placing the parts into relationship with each other and combining them again into a theory, a rational order, a system—a new entity in which everything has its place. And that which in the field of thought is the system or theory, is in practical life the carefully thought out plan or definite organization. The European hates disorder.

THE URGE TO CREATE

These two basic forms of thought, clear perception and orderly analysis, are combined in the European spirit with a third, that is, the power of faithful, unbiased, unemotional observation of Nature, with the aim of recognizing the laws by which she is governed. This power requires a certain detachment from Nature, a feeling of Man's superiority, and the consciousness of his inner freedom towards the workings of natural forces. From it arose the natural sciences and technical progress, the latter due to one more trait of the European, a trait which has brought him curse and blessing, admiration and contempt: his dynamic energy.

This dynamic urge of the European that knows no rest or quiet is contrasted by the tranquillity of life in its natural rhythm and breathing, the characteristic of the East. Is it not true that the European continues to be active where there is no necessity for it, and that the Oriental continues to remain idle where

something should long ago have been done? In Europe we find restless activity, creating, and forming; in the Orient, action through inaction, passivity, contemplation.

Just as this striving for tranquillity is usually misunderstood by the European, so European energy is usually seen by the East only in the light of its soul-destroying exaggerations. The spirit of the true European does not seek activity for activity's sake; rather does this activity spring from obligation towards his work and joy in the mastering of life. And wherever he does work corresponding to his nature, he has the feeling of obeying an inner voice and is conscious of a duty to complete the work on hand according to its inherent laws.

With this we have assembled the most important characteristics which allow us to draw a comprehensive picture of the European conception of life. The European is full of vitality, he affirms existence, turns his face towards the world, and is active. And why? His affirmation of life and the world is by no means only materialistic. Rather does it derive from the belief that God is not to be perceived or apprehended only in formless origin but is manifested in the essence of things and in the significance of their proper order and strives to make Himself apparent in the reality of space and time.

AIDING NATURE

Thus the European sees the original forms beyond all the imperfection of their appearances, and he feels an urge, indeed, an obligation to help them in their striving for realization in this world. Wherever he perceives the possibility of order, he immediately feels the desire actually to bring about this order. All appearances in the world seem, as it were, to call out to him: "Help me to become that which I really am!"

It is the meaning of the seed to become a flower or a tree. That the flower or tree must die again, does not change the divine meaning of the seed in this world. All around us we see the eternal

struggle of such seeds of God, striving towards their realization, against forces hindering their realization. Like every other creature in Nature, Man and the nations are also involved in this struggle. They all want to and must become what, fundamentally, they are. But this "Become that which thou art" does not mean to the European that he should annihilate himself in the limitless origin of the world. The imperfection of this world does not cause him to turn his back upon the world and to express his maturity by submerging himself in the origin of all things. On the contrary, it gives him the urge to change the reality of this world, as well as he can, to make it conform to the inner nature of each thing, and in this way to perfect each thing, himself, and his people. This is the meaning of the restless European energy. If one considers the spiritual contest between the European peoples on this basis, it becomes clear that it is the materialistic betrayal of the true European spirit which has brought some Western states and Bolshevik Russia into conflict with the other peoples of Europe.

Now we have the real basis for a true understanding of the place of technical progress in the European conception of life. To the European a technical accomplishment is not just a means to useful ends. Its profound meaning is rather to make possible the mastering of those conditions of time and space under which life can develop in all its forms and in accordance with its true nature. The fact that, in the hands of unrestrained individuals, technical progress has in part had other effects, by no means corresponds to the European spirit. It was the result of one of its distortions.

EUROPE AND THE ORIENT

When Europe emphasizes certain essential traits of her conception of life, she at the same time emphasizes the difference between the European and the Oriental spirit. To many, this difference may seem an unbridgeable contrast, and they may doubt whether the much talked of New Order of the world and the necessary

co-operation for it between East and West can, in the face of such differences, ever rise above the stage of economic co-operation.

I believe that these differences do not exclude a spiritual contact; on the contrary, they make it immensely fertile. This all the more so if the existing differences are not obscured but clearly acknowledged and reciprocally respected. We must, however, get rid first of the remains of that narrow idea which sees in all national differences an obstacle to mutual understanding and considers their denial the prerequisite for lasting co-operation.

Above all, however, both East and West must free themselves from the spell of the distorted picture they have of each other. It is a barrier between them to this day. Then only will the European be reminded by the Oriental's way of life not to disregard the relationship between all life and the cosmos. Then only can the Oriental power of action through inaction, of inward maturing, safeguard the European from losing himself in purely outward activity.

Correspondingly, the Oriental may, properly understanding the European conception of life, see in it that it is Man's lot and task to act in this earthly existence. He will find that there is a form of mastering reality which, far from being materialistic, stands in the selfless service of life and God.

THE TASK OF THE FUTURE

East and West will only grasp each other's most profound strength when they always bear in mind the whole picture; otherwise even the differences lose their meaning. Is not the East, for example, past master at appreciating even the smallest things of this world for the very

reason that the Oriental understands them in their symbolic meaning? Are not the traditional Japanese arts, such as the tea ceremony and flower arranging, dwarf-tree culture and garden designing, convincing proof of this? How mistaken is any conception of the Japanese nature which does not take into account the power of lightning action which the Japanese draws from his very attitude of contemplation which goes beyond life and death? And finally, do not tremendous impulses toward a positive shaping of the world and of life emanate from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintoism?

Likewise, in order for the Oriental to find productive understanding of Europe it is necessary, not only that he abandon his distorting idea of European materialism, but also that he understand the spirituality peculiar to the European. He must not forget that the creative work in the true European spirit—expressed in the immortal works of European art, as well as in science, engineering, and government—is the dynamic manifestation of a profound perception of the innermost essence of things.

With regard to the nations leading the New Order as the most powerful partners in the East and the West, there is, in addition to all this, the remarkable fact that, of all the nations of the West, Germany possesses more of those very traits which the Oriental least expects to find in the West, just as Japan, of all the nations of the East, possesses more of those very traits which the European least expects to find in the Orient. Yet one thing remains clear. The nations of the East as well as those of Europe will achieve a permanent order within themselves and in their *Grossraums* most rapidly if this order grows from their own conception of life, their own strength, and their own original style.

